

THE RISE AND
FATAL EFFECTS OF
WAR:



A
DISCOURSE
DELIVERED

ON
March 28, 1794;

BEING THE
DAY APPOINTED
FOR A
GENERAL FAST.

.....
BY ROBERT MILN, A.M.
.....

FROM WHENCE COME WARS AND FIGHTINGS AMONG YOU?
COME THEY NOT HENCE, EVEN OF YOUR LUSTS?
JAMES IV. 11

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1812
GENERAL
WAR

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

GENERAL

OF THE ARMY

OF THE ARMY

THOMAS AND SON, NEW YORK
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1794



A DISCOURSE, &c.



JEREMIAH iv. 19.

—I AM PAINED AT MY VERY HEART,—BECAUSE
THOU HAST HEARD, O MY SOUL, THE SOUND OF
THE TRUMPET, THE ALARM OF WAR.

IN obedience to the highest authority of the land, we are assembled in this place, to humble ourselves in the sight of Almighty God, to deprecate the effects of his displeasure, and to implore his pardon and protection.—When we meet at other times, for the purposes of religion, we confess our sins and put up our prayers in our own behalf; whereas at present, we appear before God to intercede for the nation of which we ourselves are a part. At other times, we raise our views to that future world where all our hopes and prospects do terminate; at present, they are principally directed to this life; because in the next, all societies are dissolved, and no man will be judged as a member of any particular community, but solely for the deeds done in his own body, whether they be good or evil; though the rewards and punishments of both states, are the result of the same general and established laws.

Rude and unenlightened nations, indulging the vanity of their imagination, believed that their gods were like themselves, liable to human passions; and finding nothing so effectual to procure the favour of their heroes and great leaders as flattery and presents, they adopted this mode of address in their religious worship. Hence, when any state declared war against another, it was their usual custom to offer sumptuous and magnificent sacrifices to the gods of their enemies, with a view to prevail upon them to desert their former votaries and become their auxiliaries.—Happy had it been for the rest of the world, and for the interests of genuine piety and virtue, if such gross and impious opinions had prevailed among heathens only. But when the Christian religion began to be corrupted, and that pure and excellent institution to be no longer regarded as the sole rule of faith and manners, the nominal followers of JESUS did what the Israelites had done of old, they first imitated the vices, and afterwards introduced the superstitions of their idolatrous neighbours; which verified our Saviour's prediction, Matt. xiii. 14, *After the master of the field had sown good seed, an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.* But of all the weeds which ever sprung up in the field of the gospel, there is not one which has produced such baleful effects, nor struck its root so deep in the soil, as mixing and blending religion with human policy, and making the former a mere engine to the latter. I shall only mention one instance to establish the truth of this remark. As there are none, who entertain the least belief of a GOD, but would willingly have his assistance in the hour of distress, therefore, when Christian powers go to war, each of the contending parties appropriates, and sanctions with his authority, times for acts of religious worship,

ship, to offer up fervent and preconcerted prayers to the Almighty, for success to his fleets and armies ; which is in other words, to address the God of mercies and common Father of all men, to strengthen the hands, and whet the weapons of his hirelings in the day of battle, that they may shed the greater quantity of the blood of his children, and their own brethren. But could we divest ourselves of prejudices, and listen to the calm and gentle voice of humanity, it is impossible but our hearts would revolt at the thoughts of war, as a thing so ruinous to the peace and happiness of mankind, and so diametrically opposite to the spirit and precepts of that Saviour who came to proclaim peace on earth and good-will towards men. Hear what an eminent servant of God says upon this subject :—*I am pained at my very heart, ——— because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.* These words are very emphatic ; as if he never heard the sound of a martial instrument, but it gave him an uneasy sensation, and excited within him the strongest emotions of sympathy and tender concern for the miseries of his fellow-creatures.

Jeremiah, whose words I have just now quoted, holds a distinguished rank among the old prophets, not only for the dignity of his office, but likewise for the long and severe afflictions which he bore with fortitude and patience. Therefore, it may not be amiss to mention some of the more remarkable incidents of his history, drawn from the few and scattered fragments of it which are left upon record.

He has been stiled the weeping prophet, because he lived in turbulent times, when his country was involved in almost continual and unsuccessful wars ; and the scenes of distress to which he had been witness suggested so many plaintive and mournful

ful reflections, that he collected them into a book, which was named his *Lamentations*. When God called him to the prophetic office, he gave him his commission expressed in stronger language, than what he ever delivered to any other prophet; as if he had appointed him, not only to denounce his judgments, but to be the very instrument for inflicting them upon the guilty kingdoms: *See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant, Jer. i. 10.*—Jeremiah's life seems to be one continued scene of sorrow and trouble, though he suffered most under Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the Babylonish captivity. The good prophet saw the kingdom to which he belonged on the very brink of ruin, yet still deluded by false and lying prophets; therefore, like a faithful servant of God, and true friend to his country, he warned the king and people of their danger, and predicted those direful calamities which their sins if persevered in, would soon draw down upon their guilty heads. But the honesty and freedom of his address gave great offence to the ruling powers, who looked upon him as a *seditionous person*, and marked him out as an object of their resentment. *Pashur the high-priest smote him, and put him in the stocks, where he remained a whole night and part of two days. (Jer. xx. 2.)*—After this he was frequently imprisoned; and in an assembly of the princes, the priests, and the prophets, it was agreed to put him to death: but his life was saved by a seasonable address from the wiser and more considerate part of them. *Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts,*

Hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them. Jer. xxvi. 17—19.—At last Zedekiah, wearied out with the importunities of his counsellors, delivers the prophet into their hands, to deal with him as they should think fit: and they, now happy in having an opportunity of gratifying their revenge, pass a sentence upon him more cruel than that of immediate death. They order him *to be let down with cords into a deep dungeon*, where, he says, *his feet sunk in the mire*, and where doubtless he was to remain, till cold and hunger put an end to his miserable existence. But it happened by the providence of God, that there was one *Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, an eunuch in the king's household*; who being informed of Jeremiah's rueful situation, was so touched with pity, that he went to the king, and addressed him in his behalf, and was so successful in his application, that Zedekiah ordered him to take along with him thirty men and ropes, and draw the prisoner out of the dungeon. (See Jer. xxxviii. 6, &c.)

I cannot pass over this historical anecdote, without making an obvious and striking reflection.—Here, at a king's court, where the alluring prospects of honour, wealth, and preferment naturally excite the selfish passions, and hide from the eye of compassion objects of distress, we meet with a man of genuine humanity, and disinterested benevolence, who, at the risk of losing royal favour and court interest, has the honesty and goodness of heart, to intercede for a poor but innocent man, though of a different nation, a different religion, yea, and of a different

colour from himself. But who was this good eunuch, and from whence came he? We are told he was an *Ethiopian*, or *African*, who had probably been sold for a slave, and whom we would call a *Black* or *Negro*: one of those people, whom unfeeling avarice degrades below the level of the rational creation, and treats more cruelly than a righteous man would treat his beast; because they are of a darker colour, as living under a more scorching sun, and are by Providence denied many of the advantages of more polished and enlightened nations. And yet, we here find the name of one of these *Negroes* recorded in the Book of Life, to perpetuate, while this sacred volume remains, the baseness and corruption of human nature, and the profligacy of those Christians, who for the sake of unrighteous gain, barter away the dearest comforts of life, yea, the blood and lives of thousands of these unfortunate beings, formed by the same Omnipotent hand, sustained by the same all-bountiful Parent, and intimately connected with themselves by the same common ties of humanity.

I shall only further inform you concerning Jeremiah, that when Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Chaldeans, their commander gave him his liberty, and made him an offer either to go with him to Babylon, where he should be kindly used, or settle in any part of Judea he pleased, which last offer he embraced. (Jer. xxxix. 13.)—And indeed he was always better used by strangers, than by those of his own religion and country.

But I shall return from this digression, to the more immediate subject of my Discourse, and what I had chiefly in view, namely, to consider the *rise* and *fatal effects* of war.

Whether there were any regular governments among the inhabitants of the old world, we are no
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where told: but we are apt to think, that if there had been judicial authority established in Adam's family, Cain would not have escaped without being punished, or at least threatened, for the murder of his brother Abel. However, Moses informs us, that immediately after the flood, God instituted civil magistracy for the punishment of offenders, by promulgating one law, and sanctioning it with his authority. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6. This being the first law of the kind, and so necessary for the support and welfare of society, it would be sacredly observed by Noah and all under his authority. But when his children left him, and went to people different parts of the world, they would soon forget the precepts and example of their pious parent. Their wants would inflame their passions, and their mutual claims to what seemed useful and necessary for each, would in time ingender strife and discord, and at last excite a spirit of resentment and revenge.—At this period of the world, great bodily strength, joined to confidence and courage, its natural concomitants, would give a man a decided superiority over his equals in other respects. These talents would at first be called forth in the destruction of wild and ravenous beasts, who at that time disputed with man the possession of the earth. Whoever therefore, could clear the country of these animals, and protect his own family and property and likewise his neighbours, from their ravages, would become exceedingly popular, and under such circumstances, naturally rise to the rank of a leader.—Such a man in all probability was Nimrod, for he is described, *a mighty man upon the earth, and a mighty hunter before the Lord*. (See Gen. x. 8, 9.) The phrase *before the Lord*, was by the Jews applied to any thing, whether good or bad,

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that was singular and extraordinary in its kind. And so was Nimrod: for it is generally agreed, that he did not confine his hunting to beasts, but that he likewise hunted men. Every thing said of this man conveys in the original a bad idea. His very name means a robber or plunderer. The most probable conjecture that we can form concerning him is this: Having collected a large body of lawless and unprincipled banditti, with their assistance, he crushed every opposition in the colony, and got himself to be crowned king of Babel and two other cities. But, as the lust of power is unbounded, this is said to be only the beginning of his kingdom; and it is added, *Out of that land went forth Ashur*. This is evidently a mis-translation. For Nimrod is still the subject of which this is affirmed. The words in the original are, *Out of that land he went forth into Assyria*. The phrase *going forth*, is used of a military expedition. It seems, therefore, Nimrod not being satisfied with his conquests in Shinaar, carried his arms among strangers, over-ran their country, and builded Nineveh and two other large cities, and according to some historians, laid the foundation of the Assyrian monarchy.

King Nimrod would have a great advantage over most of his successors, in the rapid extension of his conquests.—The earth, with a view to its future population, was at this time parcelled out among small bodies of men, or tribes, connected with one another, by the ties of affinity and blood. Their chief, or patriarch, would be the elder and more honourable branch of the family, whom they would all revere and obey as their venerable parent; and he would look upon them as his children, and treat them accordingly. Hence brotherly love and concord would cement the hearts and interests of the

the whole. The division of land and property could occasion no disputes, as each had more than he could occupy.—Such was the state of mankind in what may be properly denominated the *patriarchal* age. But what mischief can one single tyrant introduce into the world? Nimrod attacks these peaceful bodies, one after another, extends his conquests as caprice and ambition instigated him, and moulds the whole which he had brought under his subjection, into one mass of absolute and slavish dependance. Thus war and violence, founded on injustice, gave rise to the first kingdom of the world; and by the same means every kingdom since, has been raised, supported, or overturned.

From the time of Nimrod, upwards of a thousand years elapsed, before we hear of a king among the worshippers of the true God, I mean the posterity of Abraham. When they first settled in the land of Canaan, God made a solemn covenant with them, That they should be his chosen and peculiar people, upon condition of their honouring and obeying him, as their only Lord and Sovereign, both in a temporal and religious sense. And this covenant they formally adhered to, for the space of three hundred and fifty years. But when they began to be tainted with the principles and practices of the idolatrous nations, and trample on the laws of God, he sent different judgments among them, particularly war, the most destructive of any. They finding themselves miserably harrassed by war, and often defeated in battle, imputed their calamities not to their own sins, the true cause of them, but to the conduct and courage of those kings who ruled over their enemies, and were always at the head of their victorious armies. Impressed with this opinion, they go to the prophet Samuel, who was at this time
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their judge or president, and desire him to give them a king, *that they might be like other nations*. An impious request from them, who were bound by the most solemn engagements, to be unlike all other nations. The prophet lays the affair before God, who, with a view to chastise them for their sins, declares that they should have a king: but desires him to acquaint them what the character of their king, or rather kings, should be. They would take their sons and daughters; the former to attend their persons, and serve in the different departments of war, or in whatever manner they should think fit to employ them; and the latter to be employed in the offices of their household. They would take their fields and vineyards, and olive-yards, and give them to their officers and servants. They would take also from them the tithes of the produce of their soil, and of their sheep, and, in short, make them their servants. And Samuel adds, *And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not bear you in that day*. (See 1 Sam. viii. 5, &c.) This prediction is confirmed by the Jewish historians, who inform us, that they had a succession of very bad kings, who often involved their country in wars, till at last the Chaldeans carried the whole of them into captivity, where they remained threescore and ten years.

But it may be said, How does the above correspond with another part of the character of kings given them in sacred writing, their being *the Lord's anointed*? It was a part of the Jewish ceremonial, and appointed by God himself, that their high-priests, and their kings (especially when taken from a new family) should be set apart for, and installed in their office, by pouring oil upon their heads. But this ceremony bespoke no love or esteem of God for
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their persons. So far from this, that the prophet Hosea, when alluding to Saul, says, *God gave [or anointed] him in his anger, and cut him off in his wrath*, Hos. xiii. 11. And Jehu, a cruel and bloody man, was by the express command of God, anointed king of Israel, by the prophet Elisha, in order to cut off the wicked family of his predecessor Ahab; and yet this man lived and died an idolater. (See 2 Kings ix. 2. x. 31.) The Jews, therefore, by a man's being anointed of the Lord, meant nothing more than his being raised to an eminent station, to answer some great ends in Providence, either for mercy or for judgment, either to be a blessing or a scourge.—Among Christians, to call a king the Lord's anointed, which is merely a Jewish appellation, cannot possibly attach any degree of *sacredness* to his person, neither can it add to, nor diminish from, the real dignity of character.

We would naturally expect that a people blessed with the knowledge of the true God, and honoured with the custody of his oracles, would have for their rulers, men of superior virtue, and eminency of character above the rest of the world; and yet, of all the kings of Israel, there is not one who is not stigmatized for his impiety and vice. And among the kings of Judah, there are only four or five, of whom it is said that they were truly pious and good. This, however, may be accounted for, from the influence of temptation, and the imbecillity of human nature. The strongest man can only support a weight proportioned to his strength; were a heavier imposed, he would shrink and give way. It is precisely the case with the mind. It may retain its innocence amidst many temptations, but did Providence expose it to a greater one than it could bear, it would yield to, and be overcome by it. Now history, experience,
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and observation, concur in establishing this truth, that excessive wealth joined to excessive power, are temptations above the strength of human nature to resist, as they afford the strongest incentives to the great and leading passions of pride, avarice, and ambition.

Hitherto, the great Governor of the world has in his adorable providence, permitted wars and revolutions, attended with many scenes of horror, to take place in all kingdoms and empires of the world; and doubtless the same system will continue, till the happy period arrives, so sublimely sung by the ancient prophets, and so clearly depicted by the apostles of Christ, when, in the words of Daniel, *the stone cut out of the rock without hands, shall break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world*, Dan. ii. 45; or in the language of Revelation, *When Christ shall reign a thousand years with his saints upon earth*, Rev. xx. 4. That is in other words, when by the power and energy of his religion, he shall subdue the fiercer passions of men, allay the raging heat of ambition, silence the voice of war and discord, and make the blessings of peace and harmony universally prevail among all who are called by his sacred name.

Some indeed, judging from the present alarming crisis of the Christian world, may think that this peaceful state is rather retiring from, than drawing nearer to us. But we, whose views are so limited, can penetrate but a little way into futurity, and the eye of the mind, like that of the body, is liable to many and great deceptions. Some of the heavenly luminaries in our system, at times appear to us as if they were going backwards, yet our reason convinces us that they are moving on in their periodical courses with a steady and uninterrupted motion. We see and hear of many occurrences, which in our judgment

ment seem likely to retard the progress of truth, liberty, and religion; whereas, were the whole of their consequences laid open to our view, we would be satisfied, that these and these alone, are the only means which can promote and accomplish what we so earnestly long for. The most dreadful scenes that ever happened in the world have been productive of the greatest blessings to posterity, though those who bear an active part in them do suffer.—Many great changes in the course of Providence may be nearer to us than we are aware, for its ways are somewhat like that of a comet in the heavens; the nearer it approaches to the sun, the more it accelerates its motion.

Having endeavoured to illustrate the *rise* and *origin* of war, I shall now consider its *fatal effects*.

Of these, the most direful is, depriving numbers of the human race of life and existence. The very name of a soldier conveys the idea of a class of men retained and set apart for the purposes of shedding human blood. And what are all preparations for war? Nothing but preparing the instruments of death. Life is the ground of all our comforts, and the foundation of all our happiness. It is the first and most invaluable blessing which the great Author of nature, in a suitableness to his wisdom and goodness, can dispense to any created being; and when lost, cannot be recalled but by the same omnipotent Power who at first bestowed it. Hence, reason and revelation loudly condemn the taking away of life, but especially the life of man, formed after the image of his Maker, and by him constituted his vicegerent upon earth. Nothing can justify putting a man to death, but necessity alone. By this I mean self defence, or what is necessary to promote the greater good, and enlarge the sphere of human happiness.

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This is the true and only object which every law-giver ought to keep in view, not only in framing laws, but in enforcing them with punishments of any kind. By this standard, the Sovereign Lord of the Universe conducts the whole of his administration, and from this he can never deviate, because possessing in himself unlimited power and wisdom, joined with essential goodness, he will over-rule the whole system in such a manner as to make the greater good preponderate, and advance his own glory by promoting the happiness of his creatures.

When God breathed into man the breath of life, he implanted within him some leading principles which might conduce to its support and preservation. The first and strongest, was the love of life, and an aversion to every thing which could impair and destroy it. Next to this, he endowed him with a disposition to sympathy and benevolence, which leads him (if not under the influence of passion) to wish well and do good to his fellow-creatures, and contribute his endeavours to their happiness and well-being. And to strengthen and confirm the original principles of human nature, the all-wise Creator hath enforced them with the highest sanction, his own authority. Thus, under every dispensation of religion which he communicated to the world, he declared his abhorrence of murder, and promulged the most awful denunciations against it. Upon the first commission of this crime, the blood of Abel is personified, and said to *cry to God from the ground*, Gen. iv. 10. In every civilized country, the lives of men are protected by laws made for that purpose. But what are all laws human and divine, when counteracted by the violence of passion? Feeble barriers against vice; slender supports to virtue.—Affluence and power are the two great idols of this world, and of such a
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fascinating nature, that they never fail to pervert the reason and darken the understanding of their deluded votaries; and though they cannot change the nature of vice, yet they can change its name, and render that part of it which is offensive, highly specious and plausible. Thus, when men are compelled by their rulers to lose their lives in war, it is not said, that in a battle such a number of men were murdered, which undoubtedly is the truth, but that they fell in the field of glory, and died in the bed of honour: neither does the world stigmatize the beginners and promoters of war, as monsters of cruelty, sporting with human blood; on the contrary, if they prove successful, it trumpets their courage and conduct, and records their achievements in the annals of fame.—But if the blood of one innocent man cries to heaven for vengeance, how dreadful must the cry be, of all those thousands whom the great rulers of this world have sacrificed to their ambition, in that tremendous day, when the supreme Judge shall *make inquisition for blood*, Psal. ix. 12, and pronounce the final and irreversible doom of the merciless, the cruel and unrelenting?

War not only deprives men of life, but renders it irksome and unpleasant, by withholding from them many of its comforts and enjoyments; such as peace of mind, bodily health, food and raiment, the comforts of society, and the free exercise of their religion.

Peace of mind is a treasure which we can never over-rate. In the words of Job, *It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof*, Job xxviii. 15. There is only one thing which can procure and give us the enjoyment of it: the testimony of a well-informed conscience, and the approbation of our own mind. But in times of
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civil commotion, when the passions are violently agitated, in some from fear, in others from prospects of gain; when party prejudices run high, and difference of opinion ingenders disputes and strife, it is hardly possible for a good man to enjoy that inward calmness and composure, which gives a peculiar relish to all earthly enjoyments. No wonder when men began to study the art of war, that they should introduce artificial sounds to arrest the voice of conscious reflection, or how could a man coolly and deliberately enter on the field of battle, to imbrue his hands in the blood of those, from whom he never received an injury, and with whom he could not possibly have any personal quarrel?

Another blessing of life is *health*. This is also a valuable gift from our Maker, which he hath intrusted to our own care. And to engage us to preserve it, he hath implanted within us a powerful monitor, which makes us feel, that in proportion as health declines, all the beauties of nature, and worldly pleasures, sicken and lose their relish.—I need not tell you how great an enemy war is to health; nor how it suffers from cold and hunger, from the inclemency of the elements and want of shelter. In how shocking characters may one read the effects of war after a bloody battle? To see the field strewed over with mangled bodies! Numbers lying breathless and pale! Others wallowing in their blood, perhaps able to look around them, yet alas, no eye to pity, no hand to relieve them!—But leaving this too affecting scene, let us go into the Hospital of Invalids; and what see we there? A number of brave soldiers and sailors, exhausted and worn out by the fatigues of war! Some wanting limbs, which had been vigorous and strong! Others racked with pain from their old and festering wounds.

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Though these retreats are founded in humanity, yet they contain many living monuments of the fatal effects of war on bodily health and constitution.

We all know that *bread* is the staff of life; but we likewise know, that besides what is necessary for self preservation, there are, what we call the comforts of life. These, our kind and heavenly Father bestows upon his children, to enable them the more cheerfully to travel on their journey through the present wilderness. And neither reason nor religion forbid, but rather recommend the use of our best but honest endeavours, to procure such a portion of them, as may make our own lives more agreeable, and put it in our power to provide for those with whom we are nearly connected, and to contribute to the happiness of our fellow-creatures. But war, in this instance, counteracts the kind intention of the great Creator. It blasts the labours of the husbandman, and prevents the earth from yielding its wonted increase. Wherever armies march, *the land before them is as the garden of Eden, behind them it is as a desolate wilderness*, Joel ii. 3. War prevents the desirable effects of care, diligence, and attention. It creates a dearth, and increases price of provisions, by which many a poor family is brought to great distress and want. And sorry I am, that at present, so many in this island should have a *feeling* conviction of this ingrateful truth.

Of all the pleasures upon earth (and perhaps in heaven itself) the most pure and refined, are those which flow from *social enjoyment*. But war, insatiable war, robs mankind of the dearest comforts of society. It frequently tears the husband from the arms of his beloved wife and the kind embraces of his family, and compels him to go into a foreign land, perhaps to meet his grave.—When the successful commander
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returns, he is received with applause: or should he fall in the field, his death is announced with an outward parade of grief. It is not so with the common man. He lives and dies unnoticed and unregarded. If he lose his life, and the melancholy news reach his family, there, grief though not able to put on its usual garb, is genuine and intense. His widow sits sorrowful and disconsolate, brooding over her future gloomy prospects. Her children come around her and call for bread, but alas! she has none to give them but what she receives from the hand of charity; for that father who formerly supplied their wants, is now no more.

War is also prejudicial to the interests of *religion*, and has a tendency to disseminate immorality and vice. It debars those who are more immediately employed in its service, from the opportunities of joining in public worship, and from paying a regular attendance on the ordinances of divine institution, without which, religion, like fire wanting a proper support of fuel, languishes and dies away. And to this may be imputed, that obscenity of language, that habit of cursing and swearing, and profligacy of manners, for which so many in the military line are frequently reproached.—The true and genuine weapons of religion, are like itself, harmless and in-offensive; they never injure the body while they pierce the consciences of men; yet often has it been pressed into the service of war, and in the name of its peaceful Author, compelled to erect the bloody standard in order to destroy thousands of his best friends.—Religion is seated in the heart, and being of a spiritual and invisible nature, can be responsible to the jurisdiction of none but God alone. For one kingdom therefore, to make war upon another, for having a false religion, or for having none at all, is

as unjustifiable, as one man attacking another for being of a different proportion from himself; or because he wants some of his members, assigning that as a reason for his endeavouring to take from him the use of the rest. I shall only mention another observation on this head. As it is for want of sobriety, diligence, or industry, that so many contract an aversion to more laborious employments, and enlist into the service of war, their former bad principles meet with many incitements, which inflame their virulence; and being so often collected into large bodies, mutual intercourse spreads the infection, and verifies the old maxim, *Evil communications corrupt good manners*, 1 Cor. xv. 33.

I shall now apply our subject to the occasion of this day's solemnity.

The judgments of the Almighty are at present gone abroad into the Christian world, and the cup of divine wrath seems to be running over. Long has it been foreseen, and often foretold by pious and good men, that the innocent blood of the faithful followers of Jesus, poured out for many ages on the altars of *antichristian* idolatry and persecution, would at last be repaid by the just Governor of the world, if not upon the persecutors themselves, yet at least upon their posterity; and this seems to be the case at the present era.—As to those kingdoms, who under an auspicious Providence, shook off the thralldom of spiritual tyranny, and by that means procured free access to the pure fountains of heavenly light and wisdom, instead of improving their superior advantages and doing justice to their profession, by better morals and a more virtuous practice than those who are nursed in gross ignorance and error, they have become equally corrupted and depraved; therefore, their guilt is of a deeper die, and the measure of
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their iniquity is at present fast filling up. It is a well established truth, that sin long persevered in, proves at last the ruin of any people. We read of a city in the old world destroyed with fire from heaven, and a prophet tell us that this was owing to the vices of the inhabitants. *Pride, says he, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did they strengthen the hands of the poor and needy; and they were haughty and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good, Ezek. xvi. 49.*

X The nation to which we belong, is at present smarting under the hand of the Almighty, and feeling the fatal effects of one of his sore judgments. We are engaged in a cruel and bloody war, which with all the circumstances attending it, is one of the most singular and extraordinary since that period when a supernatural Providence presided over the tribes of Israel; and what, or when the end of it may be, God alone knows. We are a leading party in this war, to compel a great and powerful people, who have long groaned under civil and religious tyranny, and at last broke their shackles to enjoy a state of freedom and liberty, I say, to compel these people either to resume their antient form of government, or adopt another fabricated by the hands of strangers. But if the same laws which bind individuals in the common concerns of life, are equally binding on nations in their intercourse with one another, it must be a difficult task to vindicate one kingdom's interfering in the political concerns of another, and in opposition to their will and inclination modelling their internal policy and government. How the present war began, or in what manner it has been conducted, is not my business to enquire. These are state secrets, and as such I leave

leave them: neither do I think politics a fit subject for the pulpit, which, though commonly called the chair of verity, is too often (especially on occasions of this kind) degraded into the footstool of interested flattery and servile adulation.

But there are two questions which naturally occur to every man who allows himself to reflect upon the present alarming crisis. What are the advantages we expect to reap from the war in which we are now engaged? And on what do we ground our hopes of success?—As to the advantages of war, we can best judge of them from the causes of all wars whatever. Few arise from self defence, which is the only thing that can justify them. The common and general reasons of war are, The support of tyranny and arbitrary power; unusual interference in the affairs of others; the love of plunder and conquest; pride and personal provocation; and sometimes blind and burning zeal for religion. Now can such evil principles be the source of real good? But as to the advantages we may reasonably look for, from the war at present carrying on, I can say nothing; and I believe few or none can give an explicit and satisfactory reply.

There are two reasons commonly assigned for our hopes of success. The first and most flattering is, our own strength and prowess, joined with that of our allies. I own that in human appearance these are likely means. But we should reflect, that there is a secret Providence which mingles itself with the affairs of this world, and directs every event of life; so, as Scripture declares, *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30. A pious prince from his own experience remarks, *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:*

host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength, Psal. xxxiii. 16. It has often been observed by great and good men, that the providence of God never so visibly displays itself as in the events of war, by sometimes pulling the laurel from the head of him who hath long worn it, and giving success to those from whom it was least expected.

Many presage little good from our foreign alliances; from our connection with powers who have often injured us, and whose friendship is precarious and ambition insatiable. One good king*, for introducing liberty and more equitable laws among his subjects, is a living monument of their avarice, their cruelty and rapacity. There is a remarkable and pertinent saying of a prophet to this purpose. *After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this: Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* Ezra ix. 13. 14.

Others, and not a few, relying on the equity of Providence, argue, that the Almighty cannot but in justice punish with some awful judgments, a people so irreligious and cruel as our enemies are. Doubtless they are a sinful people, and I greatly condemn their sanguinary measures. But that the wicked are always punished for their crimes in this world, is a doctrine contradicted by revelation, and the testimony of all ages. Providence is always equitable and just, but our views of it are too limited and partial, to enable us to reason justly concerning the methods of its procedure. Sacred and profane

* The king of Poland.

history afford many instances of rude and barbarous nations, being raised up by the Almighty, to serve as a scourge in his hand for chastising others, who, having been favoured with the knowledge of the true God and the advantages of revealed religion, had abused these privileges by vicious and immoral practices. The Israelites were often subdued, and their kingdom at last brought to ruin, by their idolatrous neighbours. And when the Christian church was mostly confined within the bounds of the Roman empire, that large and mighty body, which for ages had been strong as iron, was at last overwhelmed and broken in pieces, by a people nursed in savage manners, and brutal ignorance.

However criminal our enemies may be, they have, by the over-ruling providence of God, opened a freer door to the progress of civil and religious liberty, than any kingdom which has hitherto appeared in the world. They have removed one great and standing reproach to the human species, *slavery*; and granted freedom to their slaves in all parts of the world; so that, from being treated as beings of an inferior order, they are now raised to the character and privileges of men, and made capable of civilization, and consequently of religion. They have also withdrawn the greatest bar which ever obstructed the gospel of Christ, and has produced the most fatal consequences to his genuine followers, *persecution for conscience sake*; by granting full and complete liberty to every man, without any legal restraint, to worship God according to the dictates of his own heart.—How wonderful are the ways of Providence! Who could have believed, that the very people who raised the *man of sin* to the plenitude* of his power,

* In the year 756, Rome being besieged by Aistulphus, king of the Lombards, the Pope wrote to Pepin king of France, praying his
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protection

should at present be the only Christian kingdom endeavouring to pull him from his throne! How far these things may operate in the Divine counsels to advance their temporal power and prosperity, time alone can shew.

Our success in this war hitherto has been far from flattering, and we are surely in danger when it is announced from the throne: for *fasts* are never proclaimed but in perilous times. Dark clouds seem to be arising in our horizon. I wish their direful contents may not be poured out on this guilty land; and fervently pray, that I may never hear in it the *alarm of war* either from civil commotion or foreign invasion, but that my grey hairs may descend into the grave in peace.—Our Saviour says, When ye *hear of wars and rumours of wars; of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, all these are the beginning of sorrows*, Matt. xxiv. 6—8. To this, the present state of our nation bears ample testimony. The voice of distress is daily sounding in our ears. Our commerce is interrupted, and there is a stagnation to our trade. Our manufactories are decreased, and the wonted demands for their goods are much diminished. Returns for the produce of the country are slow and precarious; owing to this, the merchant can neither do justice to himself nor creditors. Our Jails are crowded with the indigent and unfortunate. Thousands of looms are standing still; and numbers of the laborious and most useful part of mankind, no longer able to maintain themselves and families, are obliged to go into a foreign land in quest of food and raiment, or to enlist into a service

protection and assistance; who immediately led an army into Italy, raised the siege, beat Aistulphus, and compelled him to resign the whole of his kingdom to the Pope, to whom he made a solemn grant of it. And it was afterwards called St. Peter's patrimony.

which

which nothing less than necessity could have compelled them to do. In short, into whatever part of of the island we travel, we either see or hear of scenes of accumulated misery and distress.

But you may say, Suppose some or all of the above evils, are the result of the war in which we are now unhappily engaged, yet *we* can wash our hands in innocence, and guilt cannot be imputed to us, as we had no hand in planning or conducting it, neither did we approve of it in our own minds!— But we should beware of trifling with our conscience, and harbouring such false and delusive notions.— Can this war be carried on by king and ministers alone? Do we not all contribute our share to the maintenance of it? And were the nation to withdraw its helping hand, would not the bloody sword soon be sheathed in its scabbard? If the war is just and necessary, we have the less to answer for. If it be unjust and unnecessary, we are all guilty before God, in proportion as we have given it our countenance and support, and will in all probability read our sin in our punishment.

There has been for sometime past, such a collision of political opinions, as has produced a violent party spirit, which has always been found the great bane of society, by giving scope to the exercise of vindictive power; throwing dangerous temptations in the way of the naughty and unprincipled; and dissolving the ties of friendship and good neighbourhood. On the one hand are the supporters of prerogative and royal power; with whom are united the abettors of the war, and votaries of the present administration. These, by the increase of their influence and power, are the preponderating body in the scale; whilst the only one that can counterbalance them, is now become so light in the scale, that
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its weight is almost an evanescent quantity.—There is another party, and its number is not small, whose principles and opinions are widely different from the former; and though they are called by the zealous partizans of power, *sedition* and *disloyal*, yet they may be more properly denominated *discontented*. Some of this description, for publishing their sentiments with openness and freedom, have been crushed by the iron hand of rigorous law, and are greatly pitied, as victims of a cruel and iniquitous prosecution: while others only murmur, but their murmurs though silent are nevertheless sullen. Doubtless, from what the nation has already suffered, the complaints of the people are increased, and mixed with a peculiar degree of acrimony. They see and feel many grievances, which they wish to have redressed. Their taxes are a heavier yoke than they can well bear: but the payment of them is a less galling consideration, than the ways and means by which they are expended. They consider it a hard load upon the public, that so much of its wealth should be squandered away to people, who neither by talents of body or mind are of any service to their country; but like locusts fatten on the sweat and labour of the useful and industrious. They think it harder still, that the insatiable demands of faithless and ambitious powers to support their own quarrels, should serve as a drain to convey from this island that immense treasure, which if kept at home and properly employed, could make thousands of families comfortable and happy, who at present are struggling not for the comforts, but for the very necessities of life. They are alarmed at the extension of judicial power, and the incroachments now making on that constitutional liberty, which their forefathers purchased at the expence of their blood. They are concerned for
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Liberty of the Press, which, by the best and wisest men, has always been considered the great bulwark of civil and religious liberty. At present, a plan seems to be laid to undermine it, by imposing upon the materials such a heavy tax as must dry up several channels of public information: but when this *watch tower* is totally overturned, then will be heard the *last groan* of English liberty. After all, they think there is one grand *catholicon*, or powerful remedy, which if it could be obtained, would go a great way to cure all constitutional evils, a *Reform of Parliament*. To accomplish an object so long and earnestly wished for, the *Friends of the People* (an able and chosen band, whose names will be revered by posterity) have made strenuous and manly exertions. But they have been overcome, not by reason but by numbers; and have not only been deserted, but opposed by characters of great eminence, who first planned, and at that time had the honesty to stand forth in support of the same reform. Against them, their country may take up the same exclamation as an eminent apostle did against a Christian *apostate*. *Demas, having loved the present world, hath forsaken me*, 2 Tim. iv. 10.

After all the evils I have mentioned, there remains another more alarming than the whole. An inundation of vice and immorality, which pervades all ranks from the highest to the lowest, so that the words of the prophet may be applied, *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint*, Isa. i. 5. What impiety and profligacy of manners! What open insults to the great God of heaven and earth! His laws are disregarded and his statutes despised. His adorable Name is blasphemed and vilified by perjury, and by unhallowed oaths and imprecations from young and old. His worship is neglected and his ordinances
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treated with contempt. That sacred day of rest, which he set apart for the benefit of his children, that they might come into his presence, to ask and obtain the forgiveness of their past errors, and receive the aids of his grace to keep them blameless for the time to come; and at the same time, gratefully to remember that Saviour, who came to redeem them from their sins and qualify them for a happy immortality; *that* day, is by many spent in the purposes of idleness and vice, and in the gratification of sensual appetites. How many are there above any restraint from the laws either of God or man! Fraud, falsehood, and dissimulation are become a study, and to excel in these execrable arts is judged an accomplishment. Injustice and dishonesty are practised by day; while mischief and violence walk the streets during the silent watches of the night. Antient simplicity of life and manners is decried, while pride, luxury, and extravagance are the prominent features of the age. In short, moral, civil, and political evils, instead of decreasing seem to be upon the growing hand.

Now, what shall atone for these sins, and by what means shall we avert the wrath of a just and holy God? Is it by observing such a day as this, by keeping a public or private fast in a strict and literal sense, *i. e.* by abstaining from food, and from obeying the calls of nature? This, under Moses, was a part of the Jewish religion, and particular times were appointed by God himself for a strict observance of this part of their ritual. The apostle Paul declares, that under the gospel, the *observing of days and months, and times and years*, and other Jewish rites, such as fasting, circumcision, &c. *are carnal and beggarly elements*, nailed to the cross, and abolished by the death of Christ. (See Gal. iv. 9.) And our
Saviour

Saviour says, *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man*, Matt. xv. 11. A Christian fast can only be kept in spirit and in truth; by restraining our vicious desires, and abstaining from sensual and inordinate gratifications. Our religion teaches us that a sinner cannot be pardoned except he repent; and that repentance of itself is no virtue, unless it produce reformation and amendment. Therefore, let every one of us here present, review his own character and conduct, that he may know *the plague of his own heart*, 1 Kings viii. 38; and endeavour through divine aid to cure it.—Would you wish that God would be your friend through life, and your reward after death? Live in friendship with your own conscience; for if it do not *condemn* you, then you will *have confidence towards him*, 1 John iii. 20. Guard against malice and dishonesty, fraud and dissimulation, and such vices as are ruinous to your best interests both in time and through eternity. *Follow that which is good*; and in so doing you will secure the approbation of your own mind, which will prove a never-failing source of genuine comfort in every condition of life. Should you then, like the apostles of Christ, suffer bonds and imprisonment, or be sent in exile to the most remote and dreary parts of the earth, you will ever carry along with you, your best and most invaluable treasure, of which your greatest enemies cannot despoil you. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*, Ephes. v. 15, 16.—And to conclude, Live as becometh good men, good Christians, and good members of the society to which you belong. Study and practise the desirable virtues of peace and good neighbourhood. And may the God of love and peace be with you all. *Amen.*



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